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A  
METAPHYSICAL  
CATECHISM.

CONTAINING

A SUM of the Doctrines of MATERIALISM  
and NECESSITY, as at present professed.

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"Ο, τί ἄν σοι συμβαίη, τὐτό σοι ἐξ ἀγῶτος προκατακινῆσται.

Marc. Anton. Lib. x. 5.

Ergo *corpoream* naturam animi esse necesse est,

Lucret. Lib. iii. v. 176.

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L O N D O N:

Printed for J. JOHNSON, St. Paul's Church Yard,  
and sold by W. CREECH, Edinburgh, and  
J. DUNCAN, Glasgow. MDCCLXXXII.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

THE end of this publication is to represent the doctrines of materialism and necessity, in so simple, and concise, a manner, as to make them more easily comprehended. The author pretends not to instruct; he has only attempted, by abridging, to illustrate. Those, who are acquainted with the controversial writings relating to these doctrines, will see whence he has borrowed a great part of his ideas. Of the opinions expressed in the *answers*, the greater part are to be found in Dr. Priestly's Free Discussion; some are taken from other writers; and a few are rather deduced from these than explicitly contained in them. In exhibiting these opinions, no palliation has been used. To represent them without disguise was thought the most proper method to expose their pernicious tendency. The manner of dialogue has in some parts been insensibly adopted; but it is hoped that these will not be found the most exceptionable.

Notes, containing *authorities* and *remarks*, would perhaps have been a recommendation to this publication. If a second edition be called for, the author will flatter himself that the text is worth the trouble of adding them.

N. B. The reader is desired to attend to the *errata* (of the writer rather than the printer) and particularly to those belonging to Qs. 3d, 10th, and 21st, as they materially affect the sense.

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## A Metaphysical Catechism.

Q. 1. **D**O you believe the great and glorious doctrine of necessity?

A. Yes.

Q. 2. What do you mean by necessity?

A. An *order of nature* according to which all things, thoughts, words, actions, and events, proceed from *causes*, which, uniformly, and certainly, produce their respective *effects*.

Q. 3. What do you mean by a *cause*?

A. A thing which has such a relation to another thing, as uniformly, and necessarily, to be followed by it.

Q. 4. How many kinds of causes are there?

A. Strictly and philosophically speaking, there is but *one* cause of all things, that is, God; but in common language, and common philosophy, causes are divided into *physical* and *moral*, *primary* and *secondary*, and others not necessary to be mentioned.

Q. 5. What is a *physical cause*?

A. By a *physical cause* philosophers seem to understand only such as produces its effect without intelligence, design, or volition.

Thus water is the physical cause of the motion of a watermill.

Q. 6. And what is a *moral cause*?

A. According to *the true philosophy* there is none such. Common philosophers thereby mean those *views* or *perceptions* of objects, by which the mind is inclined to chuse, and to act; or *vice versa*.

Q. 7. What is a *primary cause*?

A. In vulgar philosophy, and common language, it is the first *sensible* cause, or the first that can be assigned without having recourse to the Deity, from which any effect proceeds. Thus, the main-spring in a watch may be said to be the *primary cause* of the motion of the hands; and *gravity* of the falling of heavy bodies.

Q. 8. And what are secondary causes?

A. Such as intervene betwixt the first sensible cause and the effect. Thus, the chain, wheels, and pinions, in a watch are *secondary causes* of the motion of the hands. But as I said before, there are, properly speaking, no causes in nature but the Deity. All things else are only effects.

Q. 9. Do you distinguish necessity into different kinds?

A. The true philosophers admit but one. Nothing, however, is more common than to hear of a *physical necessity*, and a *moral necessity*.

Q. 10. What is *physical necessity*?

A. *Physical necessity* is that order of nature

according to which all things proceed uniformly, and certainly, from their respective causes; and which is so fixed and unalterable, that nothing *hath been, is, or is to be*, otherwise than according to its *predetermination*.

Q. 11. And what is *moral necessity*?

A. By *moral necessity* philosophers understand a certain constitution of spiritual substances, and particularly of the souls of men, according to which the ideas, views, or conceptions of objects are said to influence the mind naturally, and uniformly, (but not necessarily, in a physical sense) to pursue happiness, or good, and to fly from misery, or evil. Examples will make these definitions more clear. A man tied neck and heels, and bound to a team of oxen in motion, is under a *physical necessity* of following them. 8 And a man starving for want of food, if food be offered him, is under a *moral necessity* of eating.

Q. 12. And does there not appear to be some foundation, in the nature of things, for these distinctions?

A. No doubt there is some *apparent* foundation for them, otherwise they had not been so universally received. But the true philosophy proves them to be totally absurd.

Q. 13. Are the actions of *mind*, then, and the actions of *body* subject to the same laws?

A. They are equally subject to the invincible laws of necessity.



Q. 14. But if mind be an *immaterial* substance, as is generally believed, how can it be subject to the same laws with *material* substances?

A. I know of no such thing as an *immaterial* substance, unless the *first cause* be one.

Q. 15. What then is *that*, in man, which perceives, imagines, judges, and reasons?

A. The brain.

Q. 16. Do you mean that medullary substance, which is continued from the head downward in the spine?

A. The same.

Q. 17. Was it then that soft, clammy substance that fancied the *Iliad*, and analyzed the solar system?

A. Nothing else.

Q. 18. Is it from a knowledge of the properties of matter that you assert this?

A. Partly so, and partly from analogy.

Q. 19. What is your definition of matter?

A. "An extended substance possessed of certain powers of attraction and repulsion."

Q. 20. Is it not also solid or impenetrable?

A. I wish to know what you mean by these terms.

Q. 21. Does not every portion of matter possess a power, or property, of hindering any other portion from occupying its place, while it remains in it? Or, is not any portion of matter capable of being so perfectly compressed, that its parts, or component particles,

shall be in so perfect contact, as to leave the mass entirely without pore, or interstice, and therefore solid; or impenetrable?

A. I deny it, because it has never been proved by fact. After compressing gold, or any other substance, as much as you can, frost will reduce it to still less bulk; which is a proof that the component particles are not in contact.

Q. 22. Is not this like denying that there is such a thing as *heat* in nature, because greater degrees of it are possible than have yet been discovered?

A. I cannot admit that there is any such thing as solid matter, as long as it appears susceptible of greater compression than any force, hitherto applied to it, has been able to produce.

Q. 23. But is not matter also said to have a *vis inertiae*, or to be *inert*?

A. Yes, and that in consequence of its being solid; tho' there seems to be no necessary connection between these two properties. As solid, indeed, it would be impenetrable; but it does not follow that it would therefore be inert; at least the one idea does not necessarily infer the other. I deny, however, that it has the property of *vis inertiae* more than that of solidity. I hold that matter possesses powers; and that it is a vulgar error to think it *indifferent* to rest or motion but as it is acted upon by some foreign cause.

Q. 24. Do you mean that a stone has a power of moving itself?

A. No: I do not mean that neither; but I maintain that it has *as much* a power of moving *itself* as a man has of moving *himself*.

Q. 25. If matter possesses not a power of moving itself, what powers do you ascribe to it?

A. The powers of repulsion and attraction, and especially attraction of cohesion.

Q. 26. But if these powers, or properties, cannot make matter act of itself, what is gained by denying it those of solidity and vis inertiae? For supposing the brain to consist of a substance, the component parts of which were indivisible monads, *cohering* together, tho' not *in contact*, might not these, put in motion, think and reason as well as is done upon your hypothesis?

A. To make a fabric tumble down it is necessary to remove the pillars by which it is supported. Solidity and vis inertiae are the two main pillars, upon which the doctrine of two substances in man has so long rested. If these be pulled away, the building falls of course. And though I do not see but the great and glorious doctrines of materialism and necessity might be true, even allowing solidity and vis inertiae to matter, yet as a champion of truth, I cannot admit what appears to me to be equally destitute of proof and probability. Attraction and repulsion



are known properties of matter, and the only ones from which its existence can be inferred.

Q. 27. But if matter be not solid, that is, if its parts be not in contact, and if, consequently, they be at a distance from one another; if, for instance, the part A be at any given distance from the part B, how is it possible that A can act upon B? According to common philosophy, if A acted so upon B as to remove it from its place, A would be said to have acted upon B by *impulsion*. But *impulsion* according to it implies contact; and according to *your* philosophy it is impossible to bring any two bodies into contact. Here, then, contrary to an established maxim, "that nothing can act where it is not," one body acts upon another where it is not; for it is asserted that A cannot be brought to touch B. I ask, therefore, *how* does A act upon B?

A. By repulsion.

Q. 28. And how does A act upon B by repulsion?

A. In some such manner as in magnetism and electricity different bodies, in certain circumstances, are seen to repel one another. If bodies cannot act but where they are, what will become of Newton's doctrine of *gravity*, which he has proved to act at so great a distance as that of the sun from the earth?

Q. 29. In none of these cases have philosophers supposed the effects to be produced by

any virtue or power inherent in the bodies themselves, but by the intervention of some other agent. And has not Newton himself said, that "the notion that matter possesses an innate power of attraction, or that it can act upon matter at a distance, and attract and repel by its own agency, is an absurdity into which, he thought, no one could possibly fall?"

A. As *he* requires a foreign force to solve the phenomena of gravity, so do *I* readily admit, that all things are ultimately produced by the agency of the Deity.

Q. 30. Attraction and repulsion being only properties, of *what* are they the properties?

A. Of extended substance.

Q. 31. Of what substance? Since you deny solidity to matter, what is it that is extended?

A. We have no ideas of any thing but from its known properties. The definition of a thing is the enumeration of its peculiar properties and qualities. I have defined matter to be "extended substance, possessed of certain powers of attraction and repulsion;" and if you abstract extension, attraction, and repulsion from it, it is impossible to tell what it is.

Q. 32. How do attraction and repulsion produce *thinking*?

A. I cannot tell distinctly *how* they produce it, but that they *do* produce it I con-

clude in this manner. All intellectual operations are evidently referred to the brain. The brain is nothing else than matter modified in a certain manner. The only known properties of matter are attraction and repulsion. Therefore attraction and repulsion are the causes of all intellectual operations.

Q. 33. May not the operations of the intellect be referable to the brain as the *place where*, or the *organ by which*, they are produced, and yet not be the intellect, or intelligent principle itself; as the harpsichord is that from which the music proceeds, altho' it be not the musician who makes the music?

A. It is a rule in philosophizing not to suppose more causes than are necessary to explain effects. The whole business of perception and thinking can be traced to the brain and no farther. It depends as much upon it as the power of giving a blow depends on a stick. Thinking, therefore, is entirely an operation of the brain. The brain is the sole, intelligent, thinking, principle in man. If it be sound, intellectual operations go on well. If it be injured, *they* are marred. If it be destroyed, *they* cease. Your instance of the musical instrument suits my purpose exactly. As it is the instrument which sounds, so it is the brain which thinks. If the instrument be good, and in tune, it plays well; and if the brain be good, and sound, it thinks well. If the instrument be



bad, or out of tune, it plays ill; and if the brain be bad or unsound, it thinks ill. Destroy the instrument, and no more music; and destroy the brain, and no more thinking. The instrument cannot play without a musician; nor can the brain think without sensations. It is not, however, the musician which sounds; neither is it the sensations which think.

Q. 34. But matter possessing no properties but attraction and repulsion, and attraction and repulsion being capable of producing nothing but motion, is it possible that they can have any other effect than an agitation of the soft substance of which the brain consists?

A. I hold it not only to be *possible*, but to be a *great and glorious truth*, that they, and they alone, produce thinking.

Q. 35. Are motion and thinking, then, synonymous terms?

A. Not so neither. But a certain motion in the brain, produced by a vibration of the nerves, is the immediate cause of thinking.

Q. 36. Do the nerves resemble the strings of a musical instrument?

A. So the true philosophy teaches.

Q. 37. And how are they played upon?

A. By *external impressions*, and by the *involuntary* and *instinctive* actions of the animal œconomy.

Q. 38. How does it appear that thinking is effected by the vibrations of the nerves?

A. The nerves are confessedly the instruments of sensation, and sensations are the causes of perception and thought.

Q. 39. But if the nerves be so necessary to the operations of the brain, will not a mutilation of the nervous system mar these operations? Will not a man, for instance, deprived of his limbs, be less capable of thinking than a man who has the use of them?

A. A man who never had the use of his limbs would, certainly, be less capable of thinking than one who has, because he would be destitute of all sensations that are received from these parts. In like manner, a person born blind is less capable of thinking than one who enjoys sight, because he wants the numerous sensations that can be received by the eyes only. But it does not follow, that a person, who has once had the use of his eyes or limbs, should by being deprived of ~~it~~, be also deprived of the ideas which he had once received by it.

Q. 40. What do you call ideas?

A. Vibrations in the brain.

Q. 41. And are not these vibrations in the brain produced by corresponding vibrations in the nerves?

A. The vibrations of the nerves are the sources, or causes, of all the vibrations in the brain.

Q. 42. But if the vibrations of the nerves be cut off, how can there be any longer cor-

responding vibrations in the brain; a musical instrument cannot play when stripped of its strings?

A. When, by means of the vibrations of the nerves, the brain has once acquired a stock of ideas, and a habit of thinking, it has a power of retaining them while it remains sound: and tho' the vibrations of any branch of the nervous system be stopt, it (the brain) may still be capable of making use of the ideas previously acquired, by means of the *principle of association*.

Q. 43. What is the principle of association?

A. It is a branch of the great *order of nature*, which belongs to the human brain, and by which the whole stock of a man's ideas are, one way or another, linked together, according to the different relations of antecedency and subsequence, cause and effect, similitude and contrast, juxtaposition and distance, &c.

Q. 44. But if ideas be nothing but vibrations in the brain, how is it conceivable that a vibration received ten years ago, for instance, and which all that time has ceased from vibrating, that is, which has all that time been *no* vibration, which is the same thing with saying that it has all that time had no existence; how is it conceivable, I say, that it should begin again to vibrate on account of any other vibration whatever? What is a



vibration but motion modified in a particular manner? And how can a motion which has once ceased be said to be renewed, or to be linked or associated to any other motion? And, consequently, if the idea or vibration of any object, of a palace, for example, has once ceased, and the means of receiving a new idea or vibration have been destroyed, how is it possible that the brain can have any idea or vibration of that palace?

A. It is impossible to tell exactly how the brain acts. It cannot be known in what manner, when an idea is carried home to it, it perceives it, compares it, or remembers it. But all the phenomena manifestly shew, that intellectual operations depend as much upon the brain, as walking does upon the feet, and handling upon the hands; and tho' we cannot tell in what precise manner these intellectual operations are performed, from what we know of the properties of matter we are forced to conclude, that it must be by some mode of motion, and most probably by that which I have mentioned.

Q. 45. Do you distinguish between the brain and its ideas?

A. Undoubtedly.

Q. 46. Are not ideas pictures, or representations of objects?

A. They are so.

Q. 47. Are they not *material*?

A. Certainly.

Q. 48. Are they then extended and divisible?

A. All matter is so.

Q. 49. But are they not only vibrations in the brain?

A. Nothing else.

Q. 50. And can a vibration be divided? Can *one* vibration be divided into *two* vibrations?

A. It follows of course.

Q. 51. And can *one* and the *same* idea, that is, one and the same conception or view of a thing, be divided into two *different* conceptions of it?

A. I believe so.

Q. 52. And do the phenomena of the intelligent principle favour this belief?

A. No: But I believe it on the principles of the true philosophy.

Q. 53. Ideas being something distinct from the brain, what is it in the brain by which it perceives them?

A. It *apprehends* them by the power of attraction.

Q. 54. Is this attraction an active power?

A. Not a *self-moving* power, but rather a *property* which results from a particular organization of matter acted upon in a particular manner.

Q. 55. And what is it that acts upon the matter of the brain in this manner?

A. It can be nothing but ideas.

Q. 56. But did you not say that, by the power of attraction, the brain apprehended ideas?

A. Action and reaction are reciprocal.

Q. 57. Ideas being material substances, and the attraction of the brain meaning only that the ideas are brought near to it, so as to give it a respectful embrace, what can the result be but the juxtaposition of two portions of matter?

A. In the case of bringing two balls of clay near to one another, the only result would be juxtaposition. But the juxtaposition of the musician's fingers and the keys of a harpsichord produces music, which is something very different from either. And the juxtaposition of ideas and the brain, in consequence of a most wonderful mechanism, produces perception, thought, reasoning, &c.

Q. 58. But these intellectual properties being totally different from all the known properties of matter, is it not more reasonable to ascribe them to an immaterial substance?

A. It is no sufficient reason for supposing they do not belong to matter, that they are different, I mean *apparently* different, from its other known properties. If we reason from analogy, there are the firmest grounds for believing, that matter is abundantly susceptible of them. Observe the gradations in the works of nature. The sensitive plant is very different from a lump of iron ore. An



oyster is very different from a sensitive plant. A spaniel how much superior to an oyster? A savage how little superior to a spaniel? And a philosopher how greatly superior to both? Analogy evidently shews that the different degrees of activity, sensation, and intelligence, which matter, in the different forms of a plant, and of a philosopher, possesses, are entirely the result of different organization and modification.

Q. 59. Do you believe that an oyster has ideas?

A. I do; tho' I think them specifically different from those of a man. The gradation of beings, from rude earth to man, may be compared to a number of musical instruments rising above one another in different degrees of excellence. To make each of the instruments play according to its respective degree of excellence, nothing but a musician is necessary.

Q. 60. And where is the musician in the great scale of nature?

A. There is diffused through universal nature, a fine material spirit, or vital principle, which necessarily actuates every organized body, according to its respective mechanism.

Q. 61. Is this the *soul of the universe*?

A. Yes; but I do not thereby mean the active principle, or *first cause*: perhaps it is only the cause next to the *first*.

Q. 62. Why may not such an immaterial substance as the soul of man is commonly said to be, be supposed to act upon the body in such a manner, as to produce all the intellectual phenomena?

A. Because, being denied by its definition to have any properties in common with matter, it is impossible it can carry on any joint operation with it, or be conceived any way capable of acting upon it.

Q. 63. Pray what is the definition of an immaterial soul?

A. "A substance immaterial, indivisible, indiscernible, unextended, without locality, and without motion." This is the definition of it according to the doctrine of the purest spiritualism.

Q. 64. What properties do you believe the Deity has in common with matter?

A. Extension. He is omnipresent.

Q. 65. Mere extension being nothing but empty space, and matter having no other properties except attraction and repulsion, do you believe it is by attraction and repulsion that the Deity acts upon matter? If you answer in the affirmative, I ask again, how was it possible God could *create* matter? Can it be said he could attract and repel *nothing*?

A. When I say that the Deity has the property of extension in common with matter, I do not exclude *other* properties. It seems necessary to allow *that* the Deity has properties

which matter has not. But *what* those properties are by which he can create and act upon matter, it is impossible for us to know.

Q. 66. Do you not believe the Deity to be immaterial?

A. Yes.

Q. 67. If then the Deity be immaterial, and if it be necessary to admit that he has a power of acting upon matter, without having any common property with it, but that of extension, which is no power, does it not follow that pure spirit *may possibly* act upon matter?

A. It does so.

Q. 68. But if it be possible for an immaterial substance to act upon matter, why may not the souls of men be immaterial and act upon matter? Cannot God create such substances, endowed with such a power?

A. God can do all things. But to argue that *because* God is an immaterial substance, and can act upon matter, *therefore* the souls of men may be immaterial and act upon matter, is not agreeable to the logick of the true philosophy. The Deity is a *singularity* in the universe; and we ought not to argue analogically from him to his creatures. I hold it to be as evident a truth as any not strictly demonstrable, that man consists of *one substance only*, and that *that* is matter.

Q. 69. Do the true philosophers believe that there is any truth in Christianity?



A. Some of them do, and others do not. For my part I profess to believe it firmly.

Q. 70. Do you then believe in the immortality of the brain? A. Impossible.

Q. 71. Has not Christ brought "life and immortality to light?"

A. I interpret all passages of scripture, that seem to favour the *immortality* of the soul, so as to suit the true philosophy. Since man consists of but one substance, and that is material, he is *wholly mortal*. Christianity only teaches a *resurrection*.

Q. 72. Does not death dissolve the whole texture of the human body?

A. Certainly.

Q. 73. And the brain, that is, the conscious, intelligent principle, is not it also dissolved?

A. It follows necessarily.

Q. 74. And is not the resurrection understood to be a re-union, and new organization of the parts which death had dissolved?

A. That is my opinion.

Q. 75. Does not consciousness, and all intellectual operations, so depend upon a particular organization and texture of the brain, that if that texture and organization were destroyed, all consciousness and ideas would be annihilated?

A. Most evidently.

Q. 76. But if that be the case, can any re-union or resurrection of the dissolved system,

even tho' organized anew, in precisely the same manner as before, (which, however, is contrary to the scripture doctrine of the resurrection) render the resuscitated substance the same *person* that existed before?

A. If the *same matter* be again organized in the *same manner*, it must form the *same substance*.

Q. 77. But consciousness and ideas being once destroyed and annihilated, how is it possible that the *self* which a *new* consciousness, and a *new* set of ideas form, in consequence of a *new* organization, should have any concern or interest in, or ought to hope or fear from, any thing relating to the *self* formed by the *former* organization? Will not the man formed by the first organization, and the man formed by the second organization, tho' of the very same parts of matter, and organized in precisely the same manner, be as distinct with regard to *personality*, as if the matter of the one were taken from the Alps, and of the other from the Andes? And consequently, does not this important doctrine of Christianity become as insignificant as the doctrines of the darkest atheism?

A. Christianity is true, and my philosophy is also true.

Q. 78. Do not some of the tenets of your philosophy seem hard to believe?

A. It requires a strong digestion. It is *meat* for men, not *milk* for babes.

Q. 79. Is it upon the doctrine of materialism you build that of necessity?

A. It is so partly, but not wholly. There is a natural connexion between them; but the latter *may* be maintained, and in fact is maintained by many, without admitting the former.

Q. 80. What connexion has necessity with materialism?

A. If the soul of man be only organized matter, and if no part of matter, however modified, be possessed of a power of self-motion, or self-determination, as is agreed on all hands that it is not, then the soul of man has no power of self-motion, or self-determination, and therefore has no *liberty*.

Q. 81. What is understood by *liberty*?

A. Liberty is understood to be a *power of acting*, or of *self-determination*. It is usually divided into several kinds; the chief of which are *liberty of spontaneity*, and *liberty of indifference*.

Q. 82. What is liberty of spontaneity?

A. Freedom to act or not as we *please*.

Q. 83. And what is liberty of indifference?

A. It is understood to be a power of acting from any one of two *equal* motives; of acting from a weaker motive rather than from a stronger; and, if there be no motive without the mind, it supposes the mind can find a motive in itself.



Q. 84. And do you reject the doctrine of liberty in all its forms?

A. No. When liberty is made to signify only spontaneity, or a power of acting as we *please*, I have no objection to the term.

Q. 85. What is it then that you particularly deny?

A. Liberty, when made to signify a power of the mind to controul the influence of motives, to act from a weaker rather than a stronger, or between equal motives to act at all.

Q. 86. Besides the argument from materialism, upon what other is the doctrine of necessity founded?

A. On the sure foundation of *cause* and *effect*, and the *prescience* of the Deity.

Q. 87. As to the argument from materialism, may it not be said, that the general conviction of mankind, that they are *free agents*, supplies sufficient reason for believing that the Deity has bestowed the power of *acting freely*, in the fullest sense, upon the human mind, even allowing it to be material?

A. No. The general conviction of mankind is founded on a gross *deception*.

Q. 88. Is it not God, then, who deceives them?

A. I grant it. He does so for wise purposes.

Q. 89. But is it not *possible* for God to confer the power of self-determination, or of act-

ing freely, on any system of organized matter he pleases? Does it imply any contradiction to say he *can*?

A. It does not.

Q. 90. Does not the general sense of mankind, then, make it *probable* that he *has* bestowed this power on the human mind, be it *material*, or be it *immaterial*?

A. No, no. Besides, the argument from materialism is corroborated by the other two invincible arguments of cause and effect, and the prescience of the Deity.

Q. 91. When you affirm that man is a *necessary agent*, do you not mean, that, in all his actions, he is impelled by *irresistible force* to act as he does, and that it is *impossible* for him, in any case, to act otherwise: if, for instance, he turns his head to the right, that it is impossible he can turn it to the left: and, in the same manner, when he refrains from doing any thing, from lifting a straw, for instance, that it is as impossible for him to lift the straw, as to lift mount Atlas?

A. That is my meaning. I would only add, that it is impossible the man should act or refrain, *in the given circumstances*.

Q. 92. By what force is man impelled?

A. By motives.

Q. 93. What are motives?

A. In actions not intellectual, they are mere attraction and repulsion in matter. In actions that are intellectual, they are called ideas.

Q. 94. But are not ideas corporeal substances?

A. Surely.

Q. 95. Are not then all motives nothing else than attraction and repulsion?

A. They can be nothing else.

Q. 96. Do you admit the distinction of actions into *voluntary* and *involuntary*?

A. I do.

Q. 97. What do you mean by a voluntary action?

A. An action that I do *willingly*.

Q. 98. And does not doing a thing willingly imply liberty of action?

A. By no means.

Q. 99. Do not the terms *to be willing*, *to chuse*, *to please*, to do any thing, imply that the agent *might not* do it, unless he pleased, chused, or were willing?

A. Without using any conditional word, I affirm, not only that he *might not* do it, but that it were *absolutely impossible* for him to do it, *unless* he chused, pleased, or were willing; except it were an *involuntary action*.

Q. 100. What is an involuntary action?

A. An action that is done *without volition*; as that of a person asleep, convulsed, or compelled by superior force. But wherever there is volition, be the motive to act ever so disagreeable, the action is, strictly speaking, a *voluntary* one. Some motives influence the *will* in an *agreeable*, others in a *disagreeable* man-



ner. In the former case a person is said, in common language, to act *willingly*, in the latter *unwillingly*; tho', in strict propriety, he ought to be said to act *willingly* in both cases. A brave soldier marches against the enemy *willingly*; a coward also marches against the enemy, but he does it *unwillingly*. The choice of the former coincides with the motive, the orders of his general: the choice of the latter, to seek safety by flight, is overpowered by an opposite motive, the fear of suffering for disobedience; and if left to his own choice, it is *impossible* for him to march against the enemy.

Q. 101. How do you prove this impossibility?

A. A coward, by the meaning of the term, is understood to prefer safety to danger, tho' accompanied with glory. If we suppose him to be, not only without the motive of glory, but any motive whatever for marching against the enemy, which is putting a very probable case, then the motive of safety stands without any thing to oppose it. If in this case he were to march against the enemy, he would act, not only *against* a motive, but absolutely *without* one: that is, there would be an effect without a cause, which is absurd.

Q. 102. And in a case where the motive and the will coincide, how do you prove that the action is necessary?

A. When the motive and the will are said

to coincide, the meaning is not, that the motive is one thing and the will another; but only that the motive is an *agreeable* one, or acts upon the mind so as to give it satisfaction. After this observation the proof follows of course. By the question it is supposed that the action is performed; that is, that the motive has had its effect; and, consequently, it was either the *only* motive present to the mind, or at least the *most powerful* one. If it was the only motive, the case is the same as in the answer to the former question. If it was only the strongest of more than one, either they all coincided, and co-operated to produce the action, or they did not. If they coincided, the case is the same still as before. If they did not coincide, but moved contrary ways, that is, the stronger motive impelled to act, and the weaker withheld from acting: let us suppose the stronger to be as 4, and the weaker as 3. If it be supposed, that in this case the action *might not* have been performed, and therefore was not *necessarily* performed, then we may suppose that a weight of 3 pounds may overbalance a weight of 4 pounds, which is absurd. The action was therefore a necessary one.

Q. 103. Let us take a particular example for illustration. Scipio, when he returned the fair Spanish captive, without ransom, and without injury, to her parents and her lover, acted, we shall suppose, from a re-

gard to virtue. This was the motive; and this motive proceeded, it would appear, immediately and ultimately, from his virtuous mind. The motive is allowed to have acted necessarily in consequence of the determination of his mind; but was he under any further necessity of acting as he did?

A. You have inferred what I hold to be absolutely impossible; that the motive for the action proceeded ultimately from the mind, and that the mind determined; in other words, Scipio acted in consequence of a self-determination of his mind. Now I affirm that the mind cannot determine itself more than a stone can determine itself. A power of self-determination implies a power of *beginning* to act; and that which has a power of beginning to act is a *first cause*. But there is no *first cause* but the Deity. To speak consistently with the true philosophy, nothing acts but him. Besides him there is no agent in the universe. Every thing else *suffers*, or is *acted upon*, but acts not itself otherwise than as an instrument. Instead therefore of saying that Scipio's mind determined him to act, it ought to be said, Scipio's mind was *impelled*, or *acted upon*, in such a manner, as to move him to act.

Q. 104. By what could it be impelled?

A. By motives. He was moved to act, you suppose, from a sense of virtue. This sense of virtue he received from his father.



His father received it from his grandfather, who received it from one who received it from Socrates; and so upward to the first cause. Every link in the chain is equally strong. Every motive may be proved, as in the answer to question 102, to be irresistibly and invincibly powerful. Or the necessity of human actions may be evinced in the following manner. The mind, according to Mr. Locke, is at first a *tabula rasa*, entirely void of ideas, that is, of motives. At first, therefore, it is entirely *passive*. It *acts* not, but is *acted upon* by instinctive and external motives. Its *first* motive for acting therefore is a necessary one. The second must also be granted, and the third, and so on. And if a succession of motives could be assigned from the moment of life to any given period in a man's age, thirty years suppose, it could be nothing but a succession of motives, all acting necessarily. For suppose at thirty years of age, a man possesses the power of self-determination. As it is granted that he had it not at first, either the mind *broke its fetters* at some intermediate period, or a succession of motives acting necessarily, after a while, begat liberty. To assert the latter is absurd; and the former is so contradictory to experience, that to advance it would be ridiculous.

It is proper to attend here to the wonderful concatenation of events. Every one hangs

upon another. That other was unalterably fixed before the last commenced, and, like it, hangs upon a third equally immoveable. The third hangs upon a fourth; and so on in uninterrupted connexion and ascent, till we come to that which is fixed to the throne of the Deity. Scipio returned the fair Spaniard. By the assistance of her friends he subdues her country. He is then at liberty to attack the Carthaginians in their own territories. Hannibal is recalled and defeated. Carthage is subdued. Rome becomes mistress of the world. Reckon either way from any link, the chain is uninterrupted.

Q. 105. Let us now suppose a case where two different motives are equally strong.—Take, for example, two pieces of money newly from the mint, of the same name, perfectly alike, and placed at exactly the same distance from the eye of the spectator. In these circumstances desire him to chuse which of the two pieces he pleases. What will be the consequence?

A. Allowing such a case to be found in nature, which, however, is not altogether probable, the answer is obvious. The mind, so situated, resembles a balance in equilibrio. It would therefore hang in suspense, and chuse neither. But this suspense could not continue long. The smallest change in the intermediate air, the most trifling sensation in the body, would be sufficient to destroy the equipoise.

Q. 106. Speaking of materialism, you laid great weight upon appearances. All the phenomena of intellectual operations, you said, evidently shew, that they depend entirely on the brain. Now, if we reason in the same manner with regard to the present subject, may we not much better say, that all appearances evidently shew, that the mind of man is free? If we appeal to individuals, will not every one, if he be not initiated in the true philosophy, say, that he never doubted of his being a *free agent*; that he *feels*, and is *conscious*, that he is so?

A. True; but all, except the true philosophers, are under strong delusions. To say that a person feels, and is conscious, that he is a free agent, is improper and false. If he attend to the operations of his mind, he may feel that he acts voluntarily; but not that he acts freely, that is, without, or contrary to, motives; which is the vulgar notion of liberty.

Q. 107. Do the assertors of liberty maintain that a man can act *without* motives?

A. They maintain what amounts to the same thing.

Q. 108. What is that?

A. That he has a power of acting from a weaker motive in spite of a stronger; or, which is the same thing, that he can make the weaker motive the stronger; nay more, that, where there is no motive whatever for acting, he can



find a motive in his own volition; that is, he can *create* a motive.

Q. 109. And do not appearances, and the common sense of mankind, favour this doctrine? The influence of motives ought to be judged of by their common effects. Do we not sometimes see a person resist the motives by which the generality of mankind, in similar circumstances, and himself, at different times, in similar cases, are carried away, and act contrary to them? In cases of indifference, as that of the two pieces of money, is not every person convinced, that he has no motive to act in one way rather than another; that the only reason why he acts so, and not otherwise, is because he *chooses* it? Is it not probable that so strong appearances are on the side of truth?

A. No, no; for then there might be an effect without a cause.

Q. 110. If the mind itself be the cause?

A. The mind itself must also have a cause, or the maxim recurs.

Q. 111. You allowed that it is *possible* for the Deity to confer a power of self-determination on the mind, even supposing it to be material; all the phenomena of human nature strongly indicate that the mind *does actually possess* such a power; is it not then the most natural conclusion, that man is not a *necessary* but a *free* agent?

A. As a true philosopher I deny it. Be-

sides, tho' I should allow that, neither the doctrine of materialism, nor the doctrine of cause and effect, nor both, were sufficient to confute your conclusion, yet as one who believes the divine authority and truth of the scriptures I cannot admit it.

Q. 112. What do the scriptures teach concerning this?

A. The *prescience* of the Deity.

Q. 113. What do you mean by the prescience of the Deity?

A. That "all his works are known to him from the beginning."

Q. 114. Do you understand these words as importing, that when God created the world, he ordained, *and foresaw*, all the actions, great and small, of all his creatures?

A. That is my firm opinion.

Q. 115. Do you not allow a latitude of interpretation, with regard to those passages of scripture, which seem to oppose *your* doctrines?

A. Yes; but I have always reason and truth on my side.

Q. 116. But, even agreeable to the common use of language, may not the passages, upon which you build the doctrine of the absolute prescience of the Deity, be understood only to signify, that when God created the world, he had one, certain, great, end in view, for the precise fulfilling of which he established certain *general laws*, which

should *infallibly* and *necessarily* operate for that purpose? Comprehended within the *great* sphere of these general laws, may it not be reasonably supposed, that there are *less* spheres of action, where the same necessity does not take place? I mean not that these interior spheres are *not* dependent on the great and general one, and, as it were, carried along by it; but only that in them there is room for a little *play* and *irregularity*, which, however, do not in the least affect, or derange, the operations and actions of the other. As a person, confined to the cabin of a ship, may go backward or forward, to the right hand, or to the left, without in the least affecting the course of the ship; so may we not suppose, that within the sphere of human nature, man may be *freely* active or idle, virtuous or vicious, pious or profane, without counteracting or interrupting the accomplishment of the great end of creation, whatever that be? If all actions and events, indiscriminately, were from the beginning unalterably *predestinated* and fixed, a *particular providence* is superfluous. If there be not a sphere of liberty within the great sphere of necessity, this *comfortable and scriptural doctrine* cannot be true. Upon the scheme of necessity there may be a *general, superintending*, providence; but that is something very different from what is understood by a *particular* one.



Now you allow that God *can* bestow self-determination, or free will, on man. The last objection, the prescience of the Deity, may be reconciled both with it, and with the scriptures. The doctrine of a particular providence, which is clearly taught in the scriptures, *cannot* be true, unless man be a *free agent*. May it not then be fairly concluded that he is actually so?

A. No. The scriptures teach that all things are known to God from the beginning; and any passages which seem to teach otherwise, must be interpreted so as to agree with this. If God has not foreseen all things, then some events, with regard to him, at the time of creation, must have been contingent. If any events were contingent, God *could not* foresee them. If there were any events which God could not foresee, then he is not omniscient. But the omniscience of God is a truth, than which nothing in the scriptures is more clearly taught.

Q. 117. But may not God be said with the greatest propriety to be omniscient, even allowing that all future events were *not present to his mind* at the time of creation? May it not be argued, that it is not so proper to say, God *could not* foresee all future events, as to say only, that he *did not* foresee them; that it was *not necessary* he should *look forward* to them all; that, in fixing the general laws which were to bring about the great

end of creation, he appointed the department of human nature, subject indeed to the general laws, and to be carried along by them, but having, within itself, a range and scope, within which man might *act with freedom*, without obstructing their uniform operation? And let the actions of men be ever so free, are not *all things naked and open to the eye of God*? Is he not therefore, in the fullest sense of the word, *omniscient*?

an. A. As a professor of the true philosophy I am bound to answer, no. For if God did not *foresee* all things, then there might be contingencies. If there were contingencies, man might be free. If man were free, he could act without motives. And if he could act without motives, then there might be an effect without a cause; which is absurd.

Q. 118. Upon the principles of necessity, how do you account for a sense of *merit* and *demerit*, of *self-applause* and *self-reproach*?

A. These are only *popular terms*, and the ideas belonging to them only *popular ideas*. The bulk of mankind are very short-sighted. For want of clear and extensive views, they refer their actions to themselves. They consider themselves as the causes of them. But could they open their eyes sufficiently, they would refer them constantly to the *first cause*. A *true* necessarian never applauds or reproaches himself; never has a sense of merit or of demerit. He has a sense of his own great

or *small value* indeed, but it is such a sense as an *hatchet*, endowed with consciousness, would have of its being a *good* hatchet if it cut well, and a *bad* hatchet if it cut ill.

Q. 119. Do not all laws, divine, and human, suppose men to be free agents?

A. Yes; but laws were made for the *vulgar*. They suggest a proof, however, of the truth of the doctrine of necessity. They suppose men to be influenced by motives. They therefore present to them the two powers, motives of rewards and punishments. If all men were true necessarians, there would be no occasion for laws.

Q. 120. But if men be not free agents, where is the *justice* of punishing when they transgress?

A. Justice is a *popular* word. A true philosopher calls it *propriety* or *usefulness*. Punishment is *useful* for the melioration of delinquents and of society. It is a motive which depends on a prior motive. It originates in the Deity, and tends to accomplish the great end of creation.

Q. 121. Is there then no such thing as *virtue* and *vice*, *innocence* and *guilt*?

A. These are all *popular names*, and convey fallacious ideas. Instead of them, a true philosopher, except when he speaks with the vulgar, says, *worth* and *worthlessness*, *good* and *ill*; and in applying them to human



character, he annexes no other idea to them than in applying them to his pen or pen-knife.

Q. 122. On the system of necessity, what is the use, or propriety, of the religious exercises of repentance and prayer?

A. They are of great use; but they are only for the vulgar. God, foreseeing that the bulk of mankind would be blind, and that they would erroneously refer their own actions to themselves, has wisely adapted the system of religion that he has presented to them, and the modes of religious worship, to their imperfect view of things. But a true necessarian has no occasion for these things. Unless he depart from his character, and think with the vulgar, it would be absurd in him to use them. While his eye is clear, and he can trace every thing to the Deity, and see every thing in him, he has no cause to repent, no cause to pray. He knows that whatever is is right. All his religious worship, therefore, consists in *praising* the author of all things. He resolves every thing into the agency of the Deity, and is satisfied.

Q. 123. Has not this doctrine a tendency to produce universal inactivity among mankind?

A. By no means. The true philosophers are the most active creatures in the world. The Deity has provided sufficient motives to activity.

**Q. 124.** You resolve all things into the agency of the Deity; is then *God the author of sin?*

**A.** "Of him, and through him, and to him are all things."

**Q. 125.** Can you swallow such a potion without shuddering?

**A.** Ay, and find it salutary.

**Q. 126.** Were your doctrines generally embraced, and practised, would they not destroy the peace, and even the existence, of society?

**A.** They are great and glorious doctrines.

to their supposed view of things. But a true necessitarian has no occasion for these things. Unless he depart from his character, and think with the vulgar, it would be absurd in him to waver. While his eye is clear, and he can trace every thing to the Deity, and see every thing in him, he has no cause to regret, or to pray. He knows that whatever is, is from him. All his religious worship, therefore, consists in praising the author of all things. He resolves every thing into the agency of the Deity, and is satisfied. **Q. 127.** Has not this doctrine a tendency to produce universal inactivity among man-

**A.** By no means. The true philosophers are the most active creatures in the world. The Deity has provided sufficient motives to activity.

## P O S T S C R I P T.

SINCE the sheets have been printed off, a few inaccuracies in the language, and the construction of arguments, have been observed, which could not properly be set down among the *errata*.

In Q. 100th in particular, there is a faultiness in the form of the argument, which throws a little obscurity over it: but it is hoped that neither that, nor any other inaccuracy, will occasion any mistake of the meaning.

In the *Philosophical Transactions*, there is an account of a man, who lived a good while after having lost the greatest part of his brain piecemeal, and yet retained his senses till within a few days of his death.—An objection against the doctrine of materialism, founded on this, and similar accounts, was intended to have been inserted after Q. 44th. but somehow neglected.

The author is sorry for the petulant air that appears in some parts of this publication. He is sensible how inconsistent it is with that respect so justly due to the learning and virtues of those whose opinions are advanced; and he begs his apology may be accepted—that no disrespect was intended, or even entertained; and that he was not sensible of his error till too late.

T H E E N D.



14

**E R R A T A.**

A. to Q. 3d. After the period, add, *This definition includes not the Deity.*

A. to Q. 10th. Add, *But this term is commonly applied to those effects only, which are produced without intelligence, design, or volition.*

A. to Q. 21ft. After *substance* add, called *solid*.

A. to Q. 33d. After *sole* dele *the comma*.

Q. 38th. For *effected* read *produced*.

